

**What is shigellosis?**

Shigellosis is a bacterial infection affecting the intestinal tract. It is a fairly common disease usually seen in the summer and early fall and may occur as single cases or outbreaks.

**Who gets shigellosis?**

Anyone can get shigellosis but it is recognized more often in young children. Those at greater risk include children in day care centers, foreign travelers to certain countries, and persons living in institutions.

**Where are Shigella bacteria found?**

Shigella bacteria are found in the feces (stool) of infected persons.

**How are Shigella bacteria spread?**

An infected person may contaminate food or water. For example, infected persons can spread Shigella by not washing their hands after going to the bathroom and then handling food that other people will eat. Another way to get shigellosis is by direct oral contact with feces from an infected person. This could unintentionally happen while diapering children, for example.

**What are the symptoms?**

People with Shigella may experience mild or severe diarrhea, often with fever and traces of blood or mucus in the stool. Some infected people do not show any symptoms.

**How soon do symptoms appear?**

The symptoms usually appear within one to three days after exposure.

**How long is a person able to spread shigellosis?**

Most people pass Shigella in their feces (stool) for one to two weeks. Certain antibiotics may shorten the time Shigella is present.

**Should infected people be excluded from work or school?**

Most infected people may return to work or school when their diarrhea ceases. Foodhandlers, day care staff, and health care workers usually cannot return to work until two negative stool specimens are obtained.

**How is shigellosis treated?**

Most people with shigellosis will recover on their own. Persons with diarrhea should drink plenty of fluids. Antibiotics are occasionally used to treat severe cases or to shorten the time the bacteria are present in the stool, particularly for food handlers, children in day care or institutionalized individuals.

**What can be done to prevent the spread of shigellosis?**

Since Shigella is passed in feces, the single most important prevention activity is careful handwashing after using the toilet or changing diapers and before and after food preparation.

